

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8669

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 5053

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH NATIONALIST PARTY LEADERS RICARDO
ZUNIGA AND RAFAEL BARDALES

SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH POLOFFS, ON NOVEMBER 20
NATIONALIST PARTY LEADERS RICARDO ZUNIGA AND RAFAEL
BARDALES, PRESENTED THEIR VIEWS ON CURRENT
HONDURAN POLITICS AND PARTY PLANS. ZUNIGA CONCLUDES
THAT CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ IS UNDER STRONG PRESSURE
FROM A GROUP OF YOUNGER ARMY OFFICERS AND THAT HE
HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO REFORM. BOTH MEN COMMENTED
THAT THE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES WILL SOON UNDERTAKE
A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO ALLOW THE PARTIES'
PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. SPECIFICALLY, ZUNIGA (NATIONALIST PARTY COORDINATOR
AND ACTUAL PARTY LEADER) SAID THAT GENERAL OSWALDO
LOPEZ ARRELLANO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE AND UNDER CONSIDERABLE
PRESSURE FROM THE YOUNGER OFFICERS (LT. COLONELS ON
DOWN). THESE OFFICERS HAVE ASKED LOPEZ TO REMOVE THE
MILITARY ZONE COMMANDERS BECAUSE OF CORRUPTION, REMOVE
SEVERAL CABINET MEMBERS (MINISTERS OF DEFENSE, TREASURY,
GOVERNMENT AMONG OTHERS) AND RESTORE THE GOVERNING
ROLE OF THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL. LOPEZ APPARENTLY
HAS AGREED BUT WANTS TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN HIS
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OWN WAY AND TIME. ZUNIGA THINKS LOPEZ IS JUST TRYING

TO BUY TIME. ZUNIGA THINKS THAT IF THE MILITARY ARE SUCCESSFUL THEY MAY BE OPENING A PANDORA'S BOX AND NO ONE KNOWS WHERE THINGS MAY END. HE FEELS THAT BEHIND THE PRESENT MILITARY GROUP, WHO ARE UNDOUBTEDLY WELL-INTENTIONED, THERE ARE YOUNGER MORE RADICAL OFFICERS WHO WOULD THEN BE ONE STEP CLOSER TO TAKING OVER IN THEIR OWN RIGHT. WHAT IS NEEDED FIRST IS THE FORGING OF A UNITY AMONG ALL SECTORS IN HONDURAS AND AGREEMENT ON STEPS FOR NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION. WITH THIS UNITY ACHIEVED, WHICH ZUNIGA THINKS IS POSSIBLE, STEPS CAN THEN BE TAKEN TO GET THE COUNTRY BACK IN A CONSTITUTIONAL POSTURE; WHATEVER RULING ARRANGEMENT IS MADE WOULD BE TEMPORARY AND FOR A FIXED PERIOD.

2. HE SAYS HE TOLD THIS TO POLOFF BECAUSE HE UNDERSTANDS THAT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW AND THAT THERE IS NO INTERFERENCE IN LOCAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS BUT HE KNOWS THAT THE EMBASSY HAS GREAT MORAL PERSUASION AMONG ALL SECTORS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY AND THIS MORAL PERSUASION SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT GETTING THE UNITY MESSAGE ACROSS, PRESUMABLY MOST IMPORTANTLY TO THE MILITARY OFFICERS NOW PRESSURING LOPEZ. NEEDLESS TO SAY POLOFF WAS NON-COMMITAL IN REGARD TO THIS POSSIBILITY.

3. ZUNIGA SAYS THAT LEADERS OF THE NATIONALIST AND LIBERAL PARTIES ARE MEETING AND WORKING ON A PROCLAMATION WHICH SHOULD APPEAR IN EARLY DECEMBER. THIS PROCLAMATION WILL SAY THAT HONDURAS HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN TEN MILLION DOLLARS IN FOREIGN AID (THE EXACT AMOUNT WILL BE SPELLED OUT) AND THAT HONDURAS MUST PLEDGE TO MAKE THIS AMOUNT GROW BY DINT OF HARD WORK AND SELF SACRIFICE. SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR PUTTING THIS AID TO GOOD USE WILL BE OUTLINED AND A UNITY OF EFFORT WILL BE REQUESTED. IF HONDURAS DOES NOT RESPOND TO THE AID IN A CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER IT WILL BE WASTED AND EXPECTATIONS OF FURTHER AID IN TIMES OF WORLD-WIDE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY WILL BE CONSIDERABLY LESSENED.

4. ZUNIGA MADE ADDITIONAL MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS: IN GENERAL HIS HEALTH IS GOOD AND HE NOT HAVING ANY CONFIDENTIAL

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PROBLEMS. HE STILL SEES LOPEZ FROM TIME TO TIME BUT THEY NEVER DISCUSS POLITICS ON WHICH THEY NOW DISAGREE BUT STICK TO PERSONAL MATTERS. LOPEZ WILL NOT VOLUNTARILY RELINQUISH POWER, HE LIKES IT AND NEEDS IT TO KEEP HIS BUSINESS INTERESTS ALIVE. HE ORIGINALLY TOOK OVER FROM EX-PRESIDENT CRUZ WITH THE INTENTION OF KEEPING POWER FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS AND POSSIBLY TEN. THE STORIES THAT HE WANTS TO RETIRE AND ENJOY

LIVING ABROAD ARE JUST DIVERSIONS. HE ESTIMATES THE PERSONAL FORTUNE OF LOPEZ AT BEING ONLY ABOUT 3 MILLION LEMPIRAS, NOT THE 30 MILLION DOLLARS OFTEN HEARD AS AN ESTIMATE. DONA GLORIA (MRS. LOPEZ ALSO ENJOYS BEING IN POWER AND IS QUITE AMBITIOUS IN HER OWN RIGHT. ZUNIGA IS EXTREMELY WELL INFORMED ABOUT PEOPLE AND EVENTS AND IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HE STILL KEEPS HIS MANY CONTACTS AMONG ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY. HE OBVIOUSLY MISSES BEING AT THE CENTER OF POWER AND IF THEY COUNTRY DOES MOVE TO A CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM AND ELECTIONS HE AGAIN WANTS TO BE CLOSE TO THAT CENTER.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 5053

5. BARDALES, WHO IS FORMAL PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS A GOOD DEAL LESS FRANK AND APPEARED TO TELL POLOFF WHAT HE THOUGHT THE LATTER WANTED TO HEAR. LOPEZ WAS ACCUSED OF BEING A TOOL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND DETERMINED TO CREATE A PERUVIAN STYLE MILITARY REGIME. BARDALES SAYS THAT THE VICTIMS OF THE LOPEZ REGIME HAVE BEEN DEMOCRACY, THE TWO POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE UNITED STATES.

6. COMMENT: THE CONTRASTING CONTENTS OF THE TWO CONVERSATIONS CLEARLY INDICATE THE ROLES THE TWO MEN PLAY IN THE PARTY. AS HAS BEEN OBVIOUS FOR YEARS, THE REAL POWER IN THE PARTY STILL IS THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF RICARDO ZUNIGA. BARDALES IS MERELY A CONVENIENT FIGUREHEAD AND PUBLIC SPOKESMAN AND IT

SEEMS THAT ZUNIGA HAD NOT SHARED WITH HIM THE INFORMATION
AND ANALYSIS THAT HE PROVIDED TO POLOFF. THE CONVERSATION
WITH BARDALES TOOK PLACE THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 20
AND ZUNIGA LATER REQUESTED AN APPOINTMENT. PERHAPS HE WANTED
THE EMBASSY TO BE PROVIDED WITH THE REAL VIEWS OF
NATIONALIST PARTY LEADERSHIP. ZUNIGA'S ANALYSIS OF
LOPEZ'S SITUATION COINCIDES CLOSELY WITH OTHER VIEWS
THAT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO THE EMBASSY IN THE LAST FEW DAYS.
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